



**Pierce County  
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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**OFFICERS' USE OF DEADLY FORCE FOUND LAWFUL**

**Summary of Investigation**

Independent and concurrent investigations by the Pierce County Medical Examiner's Office, the Pierce County Prosecutor's Office, and the Tacoma Police Department regarding the shooting death of Kenneth Wickham have been completed. Wickham died from gunshot wounds to the hand and torso areas inflicted by Tacoma Police Department officers. The incident occurred in the parking lot area of the Ram Restaurant located at 3100 Ruston Way in Tacoma, WA on October 30, 2010 at approximately 8:25 p.m.

Pierce County Medical Examiner, Dr. Thomas Clark, has ruled that a coroner's inquest is not needed and will not be held. There are no facts, evidence or statements in dispute.

Pierce County Prosecutor Mark Lindquist concluded the death was justifiable homicide per state law, RCW 9A.16.030 and RCW 9A.16.040. The Tacoma Police officers involved had reasonable cause to believe that Wickham posed an immediate threat of death or serious physical harm to several of the Tacoma Police officers and bystanders when Wickham intentionally pointed a handgun directly at the officers who were attempting to persuade Wickham to put the gun down. Prosecutor Lindquist found that the Tacoma Police officers involved acted in conformance with state law in using deadly force.

"Mr. Wickham's death is regrettable, but the officers at the scene used commendable restraint and only fired their weapons when Mr. Wickham pointed his handgun in their direction," Prosecutor Lindquist said. "This death is an example of what's commonly called 'suicide-by-cop.'"

**Summary of Incident**

At approximately 8:25 p.m. on October 30, Tacoma Police Officers Sgt. Peter Habib, Officer Scott Harris, and Officer Matt Verkoelen shot and killed Kenneth Wickham in the parking lot of the Ram Restaurant after Wickham pointed a handgun at the officers.

On October 30 at 8:15 p.m., numerous Tacoma Police officers responded to a 911 dispatch regarding a male subject identified as Kenneth Wickham standing in the parking lot of the Ram Restaurant armed with a loaded .45 caliber handgun. The caller advised the 911 dispatch that Wickham was standing next to



his red Toyota sedan with the handgun. The caller believed that Wickham wanted to do harm to himself over something involving his ex-wife. This information was relayed to the officers who responded to the scene.

The Tacoma Police officers responded to the scene with their emergency lights and sirens activated. As they arrived in the area, they parked their vehicles in the outer perimeter of the Ram Restaurant parking lot and on the street in front of the parking lot. The first officers arrived at approximately 8:19 p.m. They approached the parking lot on foot with their weapons drawn or at the ready and started to search for Wickham and his vehicle in the parking lot. They located Wickham standing by the back of his car in the parking lot area nearest to the waterfront, directly northwest of the Ram Restaurant. Wickham was the only person standing in this portion of the parking lot. The officers approached him while using other vehicles in the parking lot as cover and protection.

As the officers approached Wickham, they could see that he was holding a silver colored handgun in his right hand. Several of the officers verbally identified themselves as police officers and loudly commanded Wickham to drop the gun. Wickham refused to obey the officers' commands and yelled back at them. Wickham told the officers to shoot him and made similar statements as he paced back and forth a short distance from the back of his vehicle while continuing to hold the gun in his right hand.

Several officers attempted to move closer to Wickham while maintaining cover and protection using other vehicles in the parking lot southwest of his position. Bystanders reported that the officers continued to tell Wickham to drop the gun. Wickham refused to comply and made further statements that he wanted the officers to shoot him.

Initially, Wickham held the handgun in a non-threatening manner as the scene progressed. According to witnesses, at some point during the conversation with the officers, Wickham abruptly changed his physical posture and pointed the handgun in a threatening manner towards the position where some of the officers were situated. Sgt. Peter Habib, Officer Scott Harris, and Officer Matt Verkoelen, in an almost simultaneous manner, recognized the threatening actions by Wickham and fired their weapons at him for fear of their own and others' safety. Wickham was struck several times by the officers' shots and immediately dropped the weapon and fell face first to the ground.

Once it was determined that Wickham was no longer a threat, officers approached and began medical aid on Wickham. Emergency aid units responded and Wickham was pronounced dead at the scene.

For additional information, contact Rebecca Stover at (253) 798-4910 or [restover@co.pierce.wa.us](mailto:restover@co.pierce.wa.us)

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